

Multiplanar EMI Shielding Gasket and Method of Making

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5 filed on April 21, 2003.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates generally to an EMI shielding gasket.
10 Particularly, the present invention relates to an EMI shielding gasket having electrical
conductivity through the gasket.

2. Description of the Prior Art

[0002] EMI shielding gaskets are used to electrically seal gaps in metallic
15 enclosures that encompass electronic components. The gaps between the panels,
hatches, etc., and a housing provide an undesired opportunity for EMI/RFI to pass
through the shield. The gaps also interfere with electrical currents running along the
surfaces of the housing from EMI/RFI energy, which is absorbed and is being
conducted to ground. The gaps reduce the efficiency of the ground conduction path
20 and may even result in the shield becoming a secondary source of EMI/RFI leakage.

[0003] Various configurations of gaskets have been developed over the years to
close the gaps to effect the least possible disturbance of the ground conduction
currents. Each seeks to establish as continuous an electrically conductive path as

possible across the gaps. Some are useful in only static applications while others may be used in both static and dynamic applications. A static application is one where parts function at a fixed height and where loading force is constant. A dynamic application is one where parts function under a varying height from
5 maximum to minimum limits and where loading forces will vary inversely proportional to height. An example of a dynamic application is one where plates, hatches, etc., are repeatedly separated and reconnected to a housing.

[0004] Enclosures that house various electronic components must oftentimes be opened and closed in order to service the electronic components inside. To
10 withstand numerous enclosure openings and closings, an EMI shielding gasket must be suitable for dynamic applications. Unfortunately, there are inevitable compromises between the ability of a gasket to smoothly and thoroughly engage and conform to the surface of the housing adjacent the gaps, the conductive capacity of the gasket, the ease of mounting the gasket, the ability of the gasket to withstand
15 abrasive wear and tear as well as repeated compression and relaxation, and the cost of manufacturing the gasket. Numerous prior art EMI shielding gaskets have been disclosed.

[0005] U.S. Patent No. 6,309,742 B1 (2002, Clupper et al.) discloses an EMI/RFI shielding gasket. The electrically conductive gasket has a metallized, open-celled
20 foam substrate with a skeletal structure and a metal coating deposited onto the skeletal structure. The gasket is both recoverable and substantially deformable under low pressure. The metallization of the foam is in the form of metallic coating

on the skeletal structure of the foam. The metallic coating is deposited on the majority of surfaces throughout the open-celled foam substrate on the skeletal structure. A disadvantage of the Clupper device is that the metallization process must be carefully controlled in order to sufficiently coat the gasket with metal throughout the foam substrate to provide proper through-conductivity, yet not overly coat with metal such that the metallized foam becomes difficult to compress and/or insufficiently resilient.

[0006] U.S. Patent No. 6,395,402 B1, (2002, Lambert et al.) discloses methods of preparing an electrically conductive polymeric foam. The methods include the steps of (a) contacting the polymeric foam with a surfactant solution; (b) contacting the polymeric foam with a sensitizing solution; (c) contacting the polymeric foam with an activation solution; and (d) forming at least one metallic layer on the polymeric foam with an electroless plating process.

[0007] A Laird Technologies new product bulletin discloses a flame retardant conductive foam that provides x, y and z-axis conductivity to enhance the shielding effectiveness. A disadvantage of the Laird conductive foam is that it is designed for non-dynamic, low stress areas such as input/output shielding as well as other standard connector configurations.

[0008] U.S. Patent No. 6,465,731 (2002, Stanley Miska) discloses a through conductive EMI shielding. The Miska device uses a conductive core having either metal-plated fibers embedded into the core or a metal-plated foam core. A disadvantage of this device is that the metal-plated coating can break with repeated

compression and relaxation causing a degradation in the through conductivity of the gasket.

[0009] The metallic-plated conductive foams of the above disclosures are not re-usable in dynamic applications because the plated metal surfaces that have been
5 laid within the cells of the foam are rigid. These rigid metal surfaces will break down after initial compression has occurred.

[0010] Therefore, what is needed is an EMI shielding gasket material that is pliable and non-deformable for use in dynamic applications. What is further needed is an EMI shielding gasket material that provides conductance throughout a foam
10 core yet does not have a rigid metallic-coated composition. What is still further needed is an EMI shielding gasket material that provides conductance throughout the X, Y, and Z-axes. What is still further needed is a method of making an EMI shielding gasket that is inexpensive and retains the foam core's resilient and compliant characteristics.

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SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0011] It is an object of the present invention to provide an EMI shielding gasket useful in dynamic applications. It is a further object of the present invention to provide an EMI shielding gasket that retains it's a relatively high conductance during
20 the compression and relaxation cycles of re-use. It is yet a further object of the present invention to provide substantially similar shielding effectiveness with re-use. It is another object of the present invention to provide an EMI shielding gasket that

shields in the three-dimensional X, Y, and Z-axes. It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a method of making an EMI shielding gasket that is inexpensive and retains the foam core's resilient and compliant characteristics.

5 **[[0012]]** The present invention achieves these and other objectives by providing a

multiplanar EMI shielding gasket that has a flexible foam core, a conductive fiber web on at least one side of the foam core, and a plurality of blended conductive fibers interwoven throughout the foam core. A preferred embodiment of the present invention further includes a reinforcing fabric against the foam core where the plurality of blended conductive fibers are also interwoven through the reinforcing fabric. The plurality of blended conductive fibers extends from the top surface of the foam core, through the interior of the foam core, and protrudes outward from the bottom surface of the foam core. The EMI shielding gasket exhibits X, Y, and Z axis conductivity due to the presence of the blended conductive fibers above, below, and throughout the foam core, respectively.

15 **[[0013]]** The foam core of the multiplanar EMI shielding gasket is composed of a conventional polymeric flexible cellular foam. The foam core may be open-celled, partially open-celled, or closed-celled, depending upon the needs of the specific application. Conventional polymeric flexible cellular foams include but are not limited to thermoplastic elastomer (TPE) such as SANTOPRENE[®], NEOPRENE[®] or a
20 polyurethane-containing material such as polyester, polyether, polyurethane, or combinations thereof. The foams preferably have a thickness ranging from about 0.5 to about 50 millimeters.

[0014] The conductive fiber web of the multiplanar EMI shielding gasket is composed of a homogenously blended mixture of a plurality of conductive and nonconductive fibers. The conductive fibers of the fiber web are typically composed of silver, silver/copper, or silver/nickel on a nylon staple fiber of 1 to 15 Denier in size and 1 to 5 inches in length. The non-conductive fibers of the fiber web are typically composed of a low softening point fiber such as bi-component polyester fibers of 1 to 15 Denier in size and 1 to 5 inches in length, but preferable composed of polyethylene terephthalate glycol modified polyester (PETG) fibers. The conductive and non-conductive fibers of the present invention are blended in a typical ratio of about 75/25, with this ratio adjustable upward or downward, depending upon the conductivity and shielding effectiveness (SE) of the desired end product. The preferred composition includes nonconductive flame retardant fibers such that the blend has a typical ratio of about 65 percent conductive fibers, about 20 percent nonconductive adhesive fibers and about 15 percent nonconductive flame retardant fibers.

[0015] The conductive fiber web is formed by blending the conductive and non-conductive fibers into a homogeneous mix and then feeding the blended fibers into a textile carding machine or a randomizing fiber webber. This process produces a 40 to 80 inch wide web with a weight between 10 to 200 grams per square yard, depending on the desired conductivity and shielding effectiveness of the finished product.

[0016] A stiffening fabric may optionally be added between the foam core and the conductive fiber web to create a stiffer final EMI gasket material. The stiffening fabric may be necessary when the foam core has a thickness of less than 5 millimeters. The stiffening fabric may be used where a finished strip of gasket product having a core thickness of less than five millimeters lacks a certain needed firmness, stiffness or rigidity.

[0017] In order to enhance both the conductivity and shielding effectiveness of the conductive gasket of the present invention, a thin layer of aluminum foil is inserted between the conductive fiber web and the flexible polyurethane foam core prior to the needlepunching operation. The aluminum foil layer has a thickness preferably between 0.0005 to 0.002 inches and is available from Neptco, Inc., Pawtucket, RI. Addition of a thin aluminum foil layer improves the EMI gasket strip or die cut Input/Output gasket shielding performance.

[0018] In order to improve the ability of the strip gasket to stand up to repeated cross direction shear action, the entire back surface of the strip gasket or Input/Output gasket is covered with a special honeycomb-pattern, pressure sensitive adhesive. The special honeycomb pattern has diamond shaped apertures that allow for connectivity between the conductive back side of the multiplanar gasket and the surface upon which it is attached. This technique allows for the use of a non-conductive, less expensive PSA adhesive product such as that available as product number RX650ULT from Scapa North America, Windsor, CT. The entire gasket or

I/O surface is adhered solidly to the cabinet box or enclosure door providing superior cross shear action.

[0019] Although one embodiment of the multiplanar EMI shielding gasket material is formed by depositing the conductive fiber web onto the polymeric, flexible, cellular foam, it is preferable to form the multiplanar EMI shielding gasket material by depositing the conductive fiber web and the reinforcing fabric onto the polymeric, flexible, cellular foam. The preferred assembly of the conductive fiber web, the polymeric foam and the reinforcing fabric is then presented to a needlepunch loom. The loom needlepunches the blended fibers of the conductive fiber web through the foam and the reinforcing fabric. To avoid tearing up the foam and fabric, a special chisel pointed needle is used. The loom needle has a chisel point with a plurality of angled barbs along the needle shaft from the chisel point for a predefined distance. The barbs typically have a five-degree angle but loom needles having larger angled barbs may also be used. The larger the barb angle, the greater the number of fibers from the conductive fiber web carried through the foam.

[0020] Because the needlepunching process on the needlepunch loom tends to create a "carpet pile" like characteristic to the conductive fiber web, the intermediate product is heat-set to lock the fibers into place. The heat-setting process involves heating the intermediate product to the softening point of the nonconductive adhesive fibers, which is lower than the softening point of the conductive fibers. The softening point of the nonconductive fibers is typically in the range of about 110°C to

about 138°C. For the Bi-component polyester fibers, it is about 115°C to about 138°C. For the PETG fibers it is about 110°C.

[[0021]] The construction of the present invention provides flexibility and corner-ability that is unmatched by conventional products. It is the absence of a stiff,

5 metallized woven fabric as well as the absence of layers of coatings or adhesives used to adhere the foam to the conductive fabric that allows the present invention to closely contact the electronic enclosure in order to give as close to perfect an EMI seal as possible; a critical characteristic needed for future high clock speeds with ultra-fine electric wave amplitude.

10 [[0022]] Further, the simplicity of manufacturing and the lower cost of the raw materials used provides important savings in the cost of the finished product. In addition, the simplified manufacturing process provides a user with a much wider or broader range of applications.

15 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[[0023]] FIGURE 1 is an enlarged, perspective view of the present invention showing the multiplanar EMI gasket material.

[[0024]] FIGURE 2 is a cross-sectional view of one embodiment of the present
20 invention showing a partially formed sheet of EMI gasket material.

[0025] FIGURE 3 is a cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of the present invention showing a partially formed sheet of EMI gasket material.

[0026] FIGURE 4 is a cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the present invention showing a partially formed sheet of EMI gasket material having a stiffening fabric added between the foam core and the conductive fiber web.

[0027] FIGURE 5 is a cross-sectional view of a variety of thermoformed shapes using the gasket material of the present invention.

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[0028] FIGURES 6A and 6B are side views of needles used in the needleloom process of forming the multiplanar EMI gasket material of the present invention.

[0029] FIGURE 7 is a side view of a thermoforming line to create the final multiplanar EMI gasket material of the present invention.

[0030] FIGURE 8 is an enlarged, perspective view of the present invention showing the multiplanar EMI gasket material with a reinforcing fabric.

[0031] FIGURE 9 is a cross-sectional view of the preferred embodiment of the present invention showing a partially formed sheet of EMI gasket material.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0032] The preferred embodiments of the present invention are illustrated in Figures 1-9. Figure 1 is a perspective view of a sheet of multiplanar EMI gasket material **100**. Multiplanar EMI gasket material **100** has a polymeric foam core **20**, a
5 layer of a conductive fiber web **40** on at least one side of foam core **20**, and a plurality of conductive fibers **43** interspersed entirely through foam core **20**.

Polymeric foam core **20** has a top surface **22** and a bottom surface **24** with a plurality of interspersed pores (not shown) located throughout foam core **20**. The plurality of interspersed fibers **43** protrude from the bottom surface **24** of foam core **20** and

10 maintain electrical continuity with conductive fiber web **40**. An example of an acceptable material for use as foam core **20** is Foamex Ether foam type YCC240-115 available from Foamex International, East Rutherford, NJ. However, the choice of any low density and low compression urethane and silicone foams allows for very low closing or compression forces to the EMI multiplanar gaskets at less than 2.0 psi
15 (140.61 grams/cm²).

[0033] Conductive fiber web **40** is a blended mixture of a plurality of conductive and nonconductive fibers. The conductive fibers and the nonconductive fibers are blended into a homogeneous mix and fed into a textile carding machine or a randomizing fiber webber. The process produces a forty to eighty inch wide web with
20 a weight between about 10 to about 200 grams per square yard. The weight of the web depends on the conductivity and shielding effectiveness desired. A further

improvement in the conductive fiber web **40** has been obtained when the blended mixture includes flame retardant fibers within the mixture.

[0034] The conductive fibers are typically composed of silver, silver/copper, or silver/nickel on nylon staple fibers of one to fifteen Denier in size and one to five inches in length. In one embodiment, the nonconductive fibers are nonconductive, Bi-component Polyester fibers available from Stein Limited, Albany, NY. A typical blend ratio of the conductive and nonconductive fibers is about 3 to 1 (75/25). The blend ratio, however, may be adjusted depending on the conductivity and shielding effectiveness requirements of the end product.

[0035] Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view of the needleloom process of making one embodiment of EMI gasket material **100**. Conductive fiber web **40** is brought into a layered relationship with foam core **20** forming a multiplanar assembly **50**. Multiplanar assembly **50** is then subjected to a needleloom **500** that processes the multiplanar assembly **50** much like the process used for making carpets.

Needleloom **500** intersperses individual fibers **43** of web **40** from web **40** through foam core **20** so that a plurality of individual fibers **43** protrude out of bottom surface **24**. The needleloom process interlocks, or binds, fiber web **40** to foam core **20** forming multiplanar core **90** without the need of an adhesive.

[0036] Turning now to Figure 3, there is illustrated a cross-sectional view of the needleloom process making a second embodiment of EMI gasket material **100**. As described above, conductive fiber web **40** is brought into a layered relationship with foam core **20** forming a multiplanar assembly **50**. Multiplanar assembly **50** is then

subjected to a needleloom **500** that processes the multiplanar assembly **50**.

Needleloom **500** intersperses individual fibers **43** of web **40** from web **40** through foam core **20** so that a plurality of individual fibers **43** protrude out of bottom surface **24**. The needleloom process interlocks, or binds, fiber web **40** to foam core **20**

5 forming multiplanar core **90**. A second conductive fiber web **40'** is then brought into a layered relationship with foam core **20** at bottom surface **24** forming a multiplanar assembly **50'** composed of multiplanar core **90** and second conductive fiber web **40'**.

Multiplanar assembly **50'** is then subjected to a second needleloom **500'** that processes the multiplanar assembly **50'**. Needleloom **500'** intersperses individual

10 fibers **43'** of web **40'** through foam core **20** so that a plurality of individual fibers **43'** protrude and make contact with conductive web **40**. The second needleloom process interlocks fiber web **40'** to multiplanar core **90** forming multiplanar core **90'**.

[0037] In instances where the thickness of foam core **20** is too thin such as, for

example, less than five millimeters in thickness, the gasket material **100** may lack a

15 certain needed firmness, stiffness or rigidity. Figure 4 is a cross-sectional view of the needleloom process making a third embodiment of EMI gasket material **100**. A non-conductive, stiffening fabric **30** is brought into a layered relationship between conductive fiber web **40** and foam core **20** forming a multiplanar assembly **150**.

Multiplanar assembly **150** is then subjected to a needleloom **500** that processes the

20 multiplanar assembly **150**. Needleloom **500** intersperses individual fibers **43** of web **40** from web **40** through stiffening fabric **30** and foam core **20** so that a plurality of individual fibers **43** protrude out of bottom surface **24**. The needleloom process

interlocks, or binds, fiber web **40** to stiffening fabric **30** and foam core **20** forming multiplanar core **190**.

[0038] Stiffening fabric **30** is preferably a web of nonconductive fibers having a blend of about 4 to 1 (80/20) of Bi-component polyester and regular polyester fibers, respectively. Bi-component polyester typically has a softening point of about 240°F to 280°F. An added advantage of incorporating stiffening fabric **30** is to utilize the stiffening fabric's thermoforming characteristics in various three-dimensional cross-sections that provide better shielding strip and input/output gaskets. Figure 5 provides illustrative examples of various shapes, but should not be construed as limited to only those illustrated shapes. Each of the shapes include a foam core **20**, a stiffener fabric **30**, a conductive fiber web **40**, and a plurality of conductive fibers **43** penetrating through foam core **30**, all as previously disclosed.

[0039] To enhance both the conductivity and shielding effectiveness of gasket material **100**, an aluminum foil layer may be inserted between conductive fiber web **40** and foam core **20**. Fig. 4 may be used to illustrate the enhanced gasket material **100** as the stiffening fabric **30** is simply replaced by the aluminum foil layer. The remaining needlepunching operation is the same. It is noted that a combination of a stiffening fabric **30** and an aluminum foil layer may also be used. In such a case, the aluminum foil layer will preferably be adjacent the stiffening fabric **30**.

[0040] Figures 6A and 6B are side views of two illustrative examples of needles used in needleloom **500**. Figs. 6A and 6B illustrate needlepunch needles **510a** and **510b**. Needles **510a** and **510b** have identical crank portions **512a**, **512b**, shank

portions **514a**, **514b**, taper portions **516a**, **516b**, barb portions **518a**, **518b**, and chisel point portions **520a** and **520b**. Barb portion **518a** of needle **510a** has a plurality of five degree angled barbs **519a**. Barb portion **518b** of needle **510b** has a plurality of twenty degree angled barbs **519b**. The greater the degree angle on the barbs, the greater the number of fibers **43** carried by the needle through foam core **20**. Needles **510a**, **510b** can be purchased from Foster Needles Company and are type 15x18x40x3 CBA F56-3B/CP special 6 barb needles. Particularly important features of needles **510a**, **510b** are that the needles (a) permit penetration of a cross-section of the foam without tearing it, and (b) carry the individual fibers **43** through the foam core **20** to the opposite side.

[0041] Another important feature of the present invention is the use of a fiber blend of conductive fibers and nonconductive, lower melting point fibers. The nonconductive, lower melting point fibers are Bi-component polyester (as previously disclosed) and have a softening point of about 240°F to 280°F. Although the multiplanar cores **90** and **90'** have the necessary qualities of a conductive gasket material, the fibers in the multiplanar cores **90** and **90'** tend to create conductive fiber lint. This conductive fiber lint is unwanted, particularly in electronic applications where loose conductive fibers may cause unintended shorting in the electronic circuits. To prevent this from occurring, the multiplanar cores **90** and **90'** are subjected to a heat treatment process.

[0042] Turning now to Figure 7 there is shown an illustrative example of such a heat treatment process. Thermoforming process **700** includes a roll of multiplanar

core **90** or **90'**, a heated chamber **720**, a cold shaping die **730**, puller belts **740**, and a cutting mechanism **750**. Multiplanar core **90** or **90'** is unrolled and fed over a roller **710** into heated chamber **720**. Heated chamber **720** includes heated rollers such as a textile calendar or two heated belts that brings the multiplanar core **90** or **90'** to the softening point of the nonconductive, Bi-component polyester fibers, which is typically about 240°F to 280°F. This heating process locks the conductive fibers in place and avoids any subsequent movement or loss of conductive fibers while maintaining the gasket's resilient and compliant characteristics. The resultant material forms a multiplanar EMI gasket material that is conductive not only in the X and Y axis but also in the Z axis through the gasket.

[0043] At this point, the gasket material **100** may be stored for later die cutting or may be die cut after passing through heated chamber **720**. If die cutting is performed as part of the thermoforming process **700**, then the gasket material **100** is cooled to about ambient temperature before passing through cold shaping die **730**. Cold shaping die **730** stamps or cuts the required template into gasket material **100**, is passed through puller belts **740** and moved to the cutting mechanism **750** where the die-cut gaskets are cut to length.

[0044] The present invention and method provides a continuous sheath of flexible cellular foam having the ability to conduct electricity and to provide EMI shielding in a 3-axis (X-Y-Z) configuration. The present invention is the basic conductive gasket material for the manufacture of strip gaskets in very small and very wide widths as well as die cut Input/Output gaskets for very small and very large surface areas. It

should be understood that the composite of conductive fibers needlepunched through the foam may be made in a variety of fiber densities and foam thickness that vary depending on the application. The conductive gasket material of the present invention may also be slit into individual strips for making continuous strip gaskets.

5 Further, as explained above, using a layer of stiffening fabric made of the Bi-component polyester provides the ability to create a variety of thermomolded gasket shapes.

[0045] Turning now to Fig. 8, there is illustrated a perspective view of a sheet of a preferred embodiment of multiplanar EMI gasket material. Multiplanar EMI gasket
10 material **200** provides enhanced performance over multiplanar EMI gasket material **100**. Particularly, multiplanar EMI gasket material **200** provides better control of loose fiber retention, decrease in X, Y and Z axis electrical resistance, increased resistance to flammability, increased abrasion resistance, reduction in raw material costs, decrease in compression force requirements, better stretch control and
15 improved strength.

[0046] Multiplanar EMI gasket material **200** has a polymeric foam core **220**, a layer of a conductive fiber web **240** on at least one side of foam core **220**, a reinforcing fabric **260**, and a plurality of conductive fibers **243** interspersed entirely through foam core **220** and reinforcing fabric **260**.

20 **[0047]** Conductive fiber web **240** is a blended mixture of a plurality of conductive and nonconductive fibers. The conductive fibers and the nonconductive fibers are blended into a homogeneous mix and fed into a textile carding machine or a

randomizing fiber webber, all as described herein. A further improvement in the conductive fiber web **240** has been obtained when the blended mixture includes flame retardant fibers within the mixture.

[0048] The conductive fibers are typically composed of silver, silver/copper, or silver/nickel on nylon staple fibers of one to fifteen Denier in size and one to five inches in length. Conventional conductive fibers have a conductive metal component in the range of about eighteen percent (18%). When microprocessor speeds reach the levels of 4.0 Gigahertz, shielding gaskets must be able to be extremely conductive in order to properly function as an effective EMI gasket in the application. This means that X, Y and Z electrical resistivity must reach levels down to 10 milliohms.

[0049] When conventional conductive fibers (approx. 18% metal content) are used, gaskets must be compressed by 50% or more of their original thickness to attain resistivity levels of 10 milliohms. This high compression requirement creates an uncertain reproducibility factor during the assembly process as to the effectiveness of the EMI gasket. EMI gasket material **200** of the present invention has been produced with a conductive fiber metal content of about 27%, which provides a gasket capable of providing X, Y and Z resistivity in the 10 milliohm range when EMI gasket material **200** is only 20% compressed. This lower compression requirement provides a more reproducible and consistent EMI protection during assembly of computer systems.

[0050] While previous blend formulations included the use of nonconductive Bi-component Polyester fibers available from Stein Limited, Albany, NY, the use of polyethylene terephthalate glycol modified polyester fibers (PETG) available as T110 binder fiber from Foss Manufacturing provides increased blended fiber retention.

5 PETG fibers have a higher adhesive content and increased resistance to abrasion compared to the Bi-component fibers. The higher adhesive content minimizes the possibility of fibers shedding from the fabric structure. The preferred amount of PETG fiber in the conductive fiber web **240** was found to be about twenty percent (20%) PETG fiber content. This percentage was found to be the preferred quantity
10 to balance both the locking of the total blend of fibers while maintaining an adequate X, Y and Z-axes level of electrical conductivity in the multiplanar EMI gasket material **200**.

[0051] To further improve resistance to flammability of the multiplanar EMI gasket material **200**, a flame retardant Kanecaron fiber is added to the blend formulation as
15 a nonconductive fiber. Addition of the flame retardant fiber in the blend at a level of about fifteen percent (15%), provides EMI gasket material **200** with better resistance to the UL94 HB (horizontal burn) test. The preferred embodiment of EMI gasket material **200** is a fiber blend of conductive fibers, adhesive fibers and flame retardant fibers in a ratio of 65 to 20 to 15 percent, respectively. The blend ratio, however,
20 may be adjusted depending on the conductivity and shielding effectiveness requirements of the end product.

[0052] When cut into small gasket profiles, EMI gaskets tend to have less mechanical stability. In order to minimize the stretching of EMI gasket material **200** and to improve its mechanical stability, a reinforcing fabric **260** is included.

Reinforcing fabric **260** should not be confused with stiffening fabric **30** previously disclosed. As previously discussed stiffening fabric **30** is a web of nonconductive fibers having a blend of about 4 to 1 (80/20) of low melting Bi-component polyester and regular polyester. It is the stiffening fabric's thermoforming characteristics that permits the formation of various three-dimensional shapes as illustrated in Fig. 5.

[0053] Reinforcing fabric **260** is a fabric with a higher softening point than that of stiffening fabric **30**. Reinforcing fabric **260** is also needle punched with the blend of conductive fibers, adhesive fibers and flame retardant fibers. Reinforcing fabric **260** provides mechanical stability as opposed to the shape forming capability of stiffening fabric **30**. Various materials may be used as reinforcing fabric **260** including, but not limited to, woven fiberglass screen fabric, Spunbond nonwoven polyester fabric, warpknit fabric, etc. The woven fiberglass screen fabric is available as product number 1816011 from New York Wire Co., Mt. Wolf, PA. Spunbond nonwoven polyester fabric is available as Spunbond Polyester fabric at 43 grams per square meter from BBA Fiberweb, Nashville, TN. Warpknit fabric is available as style number 37879 from Guilford Technical Textiles, Greensboro, NC.

[0054] In addition to the use of the flame retardant fibers previously discussed, reinforcing fiber **260** is coated on both sides with a flame retardant PVC (polyvinyl

chloride) coating. This further increases the flame resistance of EMI gasket **200** and allows EMI gasket **200** to be flame rated closer to the UL94 VO vertical burn rating.

[0055] Figure 9 is a cross-sectional view of the needleloom process of making the preferred embodiment of EMI gasket material **200**. Conductive fiber web **240** is

5 brought into a layered relationship on one side **222** of foam core **220** and reinforcing fabric **260** is brought into a layered relationship on the opposite side **224** of foam core **220** forming a multiplanar assembly **250**. Multiplanar assembly **250** is then subjected to a needleloom **500** that processes the multiplanar assembly **250** much like the process used for making carpets. Needleloom **500** intersperses individual
10 fibers **243** of web **240** from web **240** through foam core **220** and reinforcing fabric **260** so that a plurality of individual fibers **243** protrude out of bottom surface **225**.

The needleloom process interlocks, or binds, fiber web **240** and reinforcing fabric **260** to foam core **220** forming multiplanar core **290** without the need of an adhesive.

As with the previous embodiment, EMI gasket material **200** is subjected to a heating
15 process to lock the conductive fibers in place.

[0056] Although the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described herein, the above description is merely illustrative. Further modification of the invention herein disclosed will occur to those skilled in the respective arts and all such modifications are deemed to be within the scope of the invention as defined by
20 the appended claims.